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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 007832

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SUBJECT: IAF MP COMPLAINS ABOUT U.S. MEPP POLICY, GOJ
"DISCRIMINATION"

REF: AMMAN 07507

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires David Hale for Reasons 1.5 (B,D)

SUMMARY

¶11. (C) PolCouns and PolOff met November 16 with Dr. Tayseer Fetyani, an MP from the Islamic Action Front (IAF). Although Fetyani was cordial and talked about mutual understanding, he strongly criticized U.S. support of Israel and rejected arguments in support of U.S. peace process policies. He also complained about GOJ "discrimination" against Islamists. End Summary.

BREAKING THE SILENCE

¶12. (C) During a visit November 5 to the Parliament to meet with an Embassy contact, PolOff shared an elevator ride with IAF MP Dr. Tayseer al-Fetyani (West Banker, Amman - 2nd District). PolOff introduced himself and engaged in polite small talk with him for several minutes. Acting on an invitation from Fetyani, PolOff then went to Fetyani's office where he met Fetyani's son, a young doctor doing his residency in a Jordanian hospital. Fetyani asked PolOff about obtaining a visa for his son to study in the U.S., but also said that he wanted to open a dialogue with the Embassy. Fetyani recognized that the IAF had refused to talk with Embassy officers in the recent past, but said that in his opinion, it was important to "try to understand each other." PolOff welcomed Fetyani's offer of dialogue and agreed to arrange a follow-up meeting.

A CAUTIOUS START

¶13. (C) PolCouns and PolOff met with Fetyani in his office November 16 for more than one hour. Fetyani was cordial and acknowledged the need for the IAF and the Embassy to talk to with one another. The ensuing discussion covered several topics, including the IAF's cautiously optimistic impression of the new Jordanian government (see ref), but Fetyani was most concerned with the Middle East peace process. Fetyani asserted that the IAF represents the true voice of the Jordanian people, who remain firmly opposed to relations with Israel and U.S. policy in the region, which they view as unfair and biased in favor of Israel.

¶14. (C) Although Fetyani tried to be polite throughout the meeting, he at times grew agitated and interrupted PolCouns to disagree with or refute what was being said. He strongly defended Palestinian "resistance" in the face of Israeli "terror" against the Palestinian people. He also rejected the idea that Arab nations and/or Arab organizations could influence U.S. policy, summarily saying that this was impossible. Fetyani condemned U.S. military support to Israel, stating his conviction that this support permits Israel to continue its occupation "and kill Palestinian women, children, and elderly persons."

GOJ IS AGAINST ISLAMISTS

¶15. (C) At several points in the conversation, Fetyani also complained about GOJ "discrimination" against Jordanian Islamists. First, he said, even though PM Fayed had visited and opened a dialogue with the IAF, party members were not included in the government or consulted on the GOJ's programs and decisions. Second, he asserted, the GOJ actively discourages Islamists from taking positions or progressing in government, and "prevents" children of Islamists from getting government scholarships or positions in state universities. He also noted that GOJ security services keep a close watch on the Islamists, who believe that they are under observation and have their phones tapped. In fact, he concluded, he was sure that the security services would contact him to ask why he had spoken with the Americans and what we had discussed.

COMMENT

16. (C) Despite the strongly divergent views on the MEPP, the meeting was cordial and ended with a pledge to continue the dialogue. Fetyani's focus on the need for Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation mirrors that of the IAF's main constituents, urban Palestinian-Jordanians. His unwillingness to look forward to the possibility of peaceful coexistence is disappointing, but also represents the view of many (if not most) Jordanians outside government.

BIO NOTE

17. (C) Fetyani is a tall, slender man who appears to be in his 50s. With his stature, long and slightly graying beard, and traditional Arab garb (except for a black leather bomber jacket), Fetyani bears an eerie resemblance to Osama bin Laden. He studied and taught in Saudi Arabia for several years and holds a doctorate in Islamic studies from a Saudi university.

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HALE